During the early 1990’s, we, brothers Art and Carl DeKleine, were drawn to the prospect of growing chestnuts commercially. With some basic knowledge of commercial fruit growing, and one year of limited chestnut research, 100 seedlings were planted on rolling sandy loam soil in west central Michigan. Nearly all died. For the next four years, that experience was repeated again and again. New methods to kill trees were invented, many stories were shared, many lessons were learned, and beneficial practices discovered that in time allowed our trees to thrive.

Once some confidence was gained, we removed 700 seedlings and planted a 5-acre block of grafted stock, then a 10-acre block, and finally transplanted mature trees to another 10-acre block. It is our most recent “story” that we share with you here.

As two retired guys, we like to share stories, especially chestnut stories. We firmly believe that we have benefited significantly just by talking to other chestnut enthusiasts. Sometimes we let our trees suggest good farming practices. When we share our story about our new chestnut planting, we invariably get the question, “And who will take over when you are older?” We say, “We don’t know.” Then comes one of two responses: “Surely you have something in mind!” or “You’re just like your dad!”

Once upon a time, about four years ago, a neighbor with an adjacent land-locked 8 acres asked if we would like to purchase it for trees. The neighbor’s dream and our dream quickly produced some serious considerations: site considerations, soil considerations, financial considerations, tree availability, layout, water and infrastructure, and our age.
About Chestnut Growers of America, Inc.

The purpose of Chestnut Growers of America is to promote chestnuts, to disseminate information to growers of chestnuts, to improve communications between growers within the industry, to support research and breeding work, and generally to further the interests and knowledge of chestnut growers. CGA advocates the delivery of only high-quality chestnuts to the marketplace.

CGA began as the Western Chestnut Growers in 1996 in Oregon where about 30 or so chestnut growers understood the need to join forces to promote chestnuts in the U.S. Eventually they realized that they needed to be a national organization and solicited memberships from every grower in the country, which took the membership to over 100. The name of the organization was changed to Chestnut Growers of America, Inc., and it was granted 501(c)(5) status. Annual meetings take place around the country in an effort to make it possible for a maximum number of people to attend. A newsletter, The Chestnut Grower, is published quarterly and distributed by mail and/or email. CGA maintains an extensive resource site available only to members containing information helpful in growing and marketing. Visit chestnutgrowers.org for more information.

Board of Directors

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Annual Membership Dues

Single membership, $35; Household membership, $45; Associate membership, $50. Members receive The Chestnut Grower quarterly. Emailed newsletters are included. Mailed newsletters are an additional $5 per year. A $5 discount applies if payment is postmarked or submitted through the website by Feb. 15. Foreign mailings may include a surcharge to cover the cost of additional postage.

Advertising Rates

Full page, camera ready $20.00
Half page, camera ready $15.00
Quarter page $10.00
Business card (4 issues) $15.00
Classifieds FREE

Email ads to chestnutgrowersofamerica@gmail.com.

Send payment for ads to Jack Kirk, 2300 Bryan Park Av., Richmond, VA 23228. Make checks payable to Chestnut Growers of America, Inc. OR visit www.chestnutgrowers.org/paydues.html to submit payment online via PayPal.

Deadlines

Issue      Deadline      Mailed
Winter Dec. 10    Jan. 1
Spring Mar. 10    April 1
Summer June 10    July 1
Fall Sept. 10     Oct. 1

Editorial Opinion

The views, articles and advertising appearing in The Chestnut Grower do not necessarily reflect the attitude nor policy of Chestnut Growers of America, Inc., its members, officers, Board of Directors, or Editor. Chestnut Growers of America, Inc., and this publication are not responsible for errors and/or misrepresentations in advertising. The Editor reserves the right to reject or edit all material submitted for publication.

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Message from CGA President Roger Blackwell, Chestnut Grower

Happy New Year 2019, Chestnut Growers of America Members!

Our next annual meeting will be hosted by Roger Blackwell & Bill Nash in Michigan. We are planning a great session for Friday, June 7th through Sunday, June 9th, 2019. Complete details will be found in the April newsletter. Bill and I will be getting additional information out to all our members via email in the next month.

This newsletter has three great articles. The first article is provided by Carl and Art De Kleine on “Planting a Commercial Chestnut Orchard – Our Story”. The two brothers have learned through trials and tribulations over the last 25 years about growing a great chestnut orchard. They are major contributors to growing the commercial chestnut industry in Michigan.

The next article is an update on the AIMS project from Dr. Jeane Romero-Severson titled “Speed bumps on the way to keeping track of your stuff”. Questions asked are: How is the Ancestry Informative Markers (AIMs) Project for Chestnut Trees progressing? What is the next step in the project? The use of genomics technology is explained with the assistance of her Notre Dame colleagues willing to help with the project.

The third article to reference in this newsletter is contributed by Erin Lizotte, Michigan State University Extension Agent titled “Preparing chestnut orchards for winter”. Erin describes in detail how preparing chestnuts for winter, including sunscald prevention and soil testing, can all be taken care of just after the harvesting season. This is all good information to know and utilize.

Please remember the purpose of CGA is to promote chestnuts, to share information among growers of chestnuts, to improve communications between growers within the industry, to support research and breeding work, and generally to further the interests and knowledge of Chestnut growers. Thank you all for your contributions to CGA.

I hope you all had a wonderful holiday season with family and friends. See you all in Michigan June 2019.

Best Regards,
Roger
AIMS Project Update: Speed Bumps on the Way to Keeping Track of Your Stuff

By Jeanne Romero-Severson, Professor, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN | jromeros@nd.edu

The ultimate goal of the AIMS project is to determine the species ancestry and the immediate pedigree (grandparents, parents and siblings) of any chestnut tree submitted for testing, at a price point no higher than $50 per tree. The “development” part of research and development is the underground, backroom, in-the-basement part of science, where great ideas go to grow up and become practical, cost-effective procedures. During this maturation process some great inspirations turn into dismal failures. What happens then? Right! You get over it and try again. This is where we are with the AIMS project.

What Works?
What we have that works is tissue storage and DNA extraction and keeping track of your samples. None of that work needs to be redone. We have tried an array of technologies to do the genotyping and have tested one that works spectacularly well. This is called sequence capture, followed by high throughput genotyping. This technology meets our twin criteria: 1) at least 90% of the DNA markers we submitted were successfully sequenced and 2) every sample we submitted had less than 10% missing data.

So why haven’t we just declared victory and gotten on with genotyping everything? Because this technology would cost $150/sample if we do at least 90 samples at once. The price per sample does not drop if we do more, but rises if we do less. This is not a price that is affordable for most growers. This price is feasible, perhaps, for a cultivar patent application, or a forensic case, but not for ascertainment of ancestry, immediate pedigree, or barcoding for the hundreds or even thousands of trees in a breeding program.

What Doesn’t Work?
There are many companies in the world who claim that their high-tech, high-throughput genotyping service is the answer to all genotyping needs. One of my collaborators on this project became convinced that Company A had a technology that would be perfect for what we are trying to do, for a price point we could afford. I decided to try this, because

Continued on page 8...

Mark Your Calendars!

For the Chestnut Growers of America 2019 Annual Meeting in East Lansing, Michigan, hosted by Roger Blackwell and Bill Nash.

June 7 - 9, 2019

More details, including registration and lodging information, coming in the April issue!

Happy New Year!

Your 2019 membership dues are now due. You have two options:

Renew Online

Download a fillable form from the CGA website at www.chestnutgrowers.org/2019_CGA_Membership_Application_fillable.pdf. If you receive the e-version of the newsletter, the form is also attached to that email. Complete the form and email it to Jack Kirk, CGA secretary/treasurer, at jackschestnuts@gmail.com. You can then pay your dues through the CGA website by visiting www.chestnutgrowers.org/paydues.html. Please make sure you submit both your application and payment at the same time! ~OR~

Renew by Mail

Please fill out, detach, and return the membership renewal form included with this issue on page 9. Send the form with a check made payable to Chestnut Growers of America, Inc. to Jack Kirk, 2300 Bryan Park Ave., Richmond, VA 23228.

Renew now - a $5 discount on membership dues applies if payment is submitted by February 15, 2019! If you are a new member who joined after August 1, 2018, your dues are already paid for 2019.
The dream quickly became a reality. We purchased the land – 8 acres on a sandy-loam ridge sloping down on both sides. The old farm land had fence rows and big trees in and on the side of the property. It took three years to clear the land, get the soil nutrients to an acceptable level, and order the trees.

Commercial growers, like us, want a large volume of good nuts commonly grown by other growers (for sale identification), all nuts suited for the climate and soil conditions, all trees ripening at the same time, all trees asking for the same care, and all trees satisfied with the same well-timed pollinizers.

We decided to stick with the Colossal variety for production. The Colossal has a larger nut than many other varieties, is sweet when cured well, sells well, and grows well in our climate. We have had a number of pollinizers die in our climate, so we planted about eight different pollinizer varieties. Grafted trees can be purchased as either bare-root for spring planting or potted for fall planting. We chose bare-root trees in the spring from the Washington Chestnut Company (www.WashingtonChestnut.com). They have been good to us in the past and have supplied very good trees. We needed to order the trees a year in advance. Depending on where one lives, shipping chestnuts and chestnut wood across state lines can be problematic.

Once the land had been prepared, the trees ordered, and longer warmer days were on the way, it was time to figure out how to get 450 trees in the ground quickly.

Planning the tree layout and ordering the chosen varieties took more time than we anticipated. We liked the eight-productive-trees-with-one-pollinizer pattern that we had used in the past. We used a 20’ x 20’ pattern on half of the orchard, and a 20’ x 40’ pattern on the other half. We know that in about 12 years the 20’ x 20’ pattern will need to be thinned to a 20’ x 40’ pattern when the trees canopy.

Spacing - Trees/Acre Estimates
20 x 20 - 100
40 x 40 - 27
30 x 30 - 50
20 x 40 - 55
20 x 30 - 70

The next step was putting in 5/8” electrical conduit tree stakes. A high-pressure hose was attached to the sprayer, one student pushed the high-pressure hose 2’ into the ground, and a second student put an 8’ conduit into the hole. That job took about 3 hours.

The last important job was making sure that the trees received enough water during the summer. Our irrigation specialist recommended underground Netafim drip line on both sides of each tree row. The Internet shows all the advantages of this drip tape. For us, the biggest advantage will be weed control and harvest without irrigation tubes down the tree rows to contend with.

We found suggestions for laying the tape on YouTube. We purchased a 3-point...
As two retired guys, we like to share stories, especially chestnut stories. We firmly believe that we have benefited significantly just by talking to other chestnut enthusiasts. Sometimes we let our trees suggest good farming practices. We chuckle at the thought that they know they will be around long after we’re gone; but nevertheless, they continue to pretend that we are in charge.

In our orchards we grow both cherries and chestnuts. Except for harvest and a couple of multi-person jobs, hired labor consists of a brother-in-law and two high-school students. Over the past 50 years we have had amazingly good help. The help is paid for the lunch period, and it is expected that all of us will eat noon lunch together. This helps all of us connect with one another and share plans and expectations. It doesn’t take long for an informed and cooperative effort to be realized.

Some work was needed getting irrigation water from the well to the field. We laid out the plans, purchased the PVC pieces, and the two boys efficiently and quickly put the system together.

Watching and communicating with the trees is also important. We think the trees are telling us that we should spend some more time thinking about weed control practices. And we chuckle at the thought that the trees know they will be around long after we’re gone; but nevertheless, they continue to pretend that we are in charge.

We certainly have had fun for 25 years, learned a lot, and have benefited from sharing stories with others. We still don’t know who will take over the orchard when we are older, but we intend to enjoy the orchard and spin more stories for ever and ever.
Preparing Chestnut Orchards for Winter

By Erin Lizotte, Michigan State University Extension | taylo548@msu.edu

As chestnut harvest wraps up, you will need to prepare orchards for winter. Preventing sunscald and vole damage, winterizing irrigation, planning for any orchard expansions and soil testing can all be taken care of at this time.

Preventing Sunscald

Sunscald occurs when large temperature swings take place in the transition between a sunny day and cold night. It occurs on the south or west facing portions of the trunk that receive the most sunlight and occurs when the sun warms the bark of a tree and causes the cells just under the bark to break dormancy. When the sun sets and the temperature rapidly drops, the cells that have broken dormancy are destroyed.

Young trees with thin bark are more susceptible to sunscald, but it can occur on mature chestnut trees. Damage from sunscald leaves bark with a sunken appearance where cells have died. The cankers that erupt due to bark death can look similar to chestnut blight and open the tree up to secondary pathogens and long-term issues.

Sunscald can be managed by applying white latex paint from the soil line of the trunk up to the first branches. White paint helps reflect the sun and prevents the tree from overwarming on sunny winter days. Most growers dilute the paint with water to make it easier to apply and cover more trees. Paint should be reapplied regularly as it fades and the tree grows, ideally annually.

Preventing Rodent Damage

Another issue growers face in the winter is vole damage. Voles and rodents in general can be a major problem for chestnut growers. Rodents girdle trees and can directly damage or consume nuts. Burrows and tunnels may also present tripping and falling hazards for agricultural workers. Common rodent pest species include voles, ground squirrels, deer mice, and house mice.

Rodent populations expand and contract based on a number of environmental factors and tend to be cyclical. Constantly fluctuating populations can make consistent integrated control programs difficult to maintain, but a regular combination of strategies including monitoring, habitat management, and rodenticide application are generally required to achieve reasonable control.

Voles typically only damage small trees (less than 3 years old), so it's best to apply mouse guards each fall and remove them each spring. Mouse guards provide a physical barrier to prevent damage but must be removed each spring as they can girdle actively growing trees over time. Modifying environmental factors to moderate rodent populations can also be useful. Burning, mowing, using herbicides, or planting low growing ground cover to reduce vegetative cover can help make a site less attractive to rodents. Controlling ground cover also exposes rodents to greater risk of raptors, coyotes and other predators. Removing plant cover surrounding an agricultural area may also help in slowing movement of new rodents into a site.

You may also consider encouraging raptor predators through perches or nest boxes. Ideally, adjacent landowners can work together to manage large areas of land to prevent high rodent populations from becoming established.

Using rodenticides is another important component of an integrated rodent control program, but it is not a stand-alone control. Rodents have a relatively short lifespan and a high rate of reproduction, making lethal control strategies effective for a limited amount of time, further enforcing the need for an integrated approach to control. There are a limited number of rodenticides labeled for use in perennial cropping systems. Carefully review labels to ensure the site is listed before application. You can refer to the Michigan State University Extension article "Rodent control for Michigan fruit,
First, there is more time available in the fall to collect soil samples and make fertilizer decisions compared to spring. Weather conditions typically are more favorable for collecting soil samples as compared to spring. Unpredictable spring weather conditions can force postponement or even abandonment of soil testing for that year. As chestnut sites often require the use of soil acidifying applications of sulfur, fall applications can take advantage of frost heave and snow melt to move sulfur into the soil and affect the pH and nutrient availability before trees begin growing again in the spring.

Based on the soil test results, fertilizer can also be purchased prior to the end of the year. Fertilizer is often cheaper in the fall compared to spring, when demand is high. Purchasing fertilizer prior to the end of the year could also potentially have favorable tax implications. Lastly, soil testing laboratories are busier in the spring compared to fall, as a majority of farmers, gardeners, and homeowners wait until spring to soil test. A longer wait for soil testing results may force delays in fertilizer timing.

Planning for Next Year

Lastly, growers considering an orchard expansion should start planning for and ordering trees at this time. Larger quantities of trees typically require substantial lead time. For more information on orchard design, check out the Orchard Design and Establishment section of the MSU Extension Chestnuts website (http://www.canr.msu.edu/chestnuts/establishing_orchards/orchard-design-establishment) and the new Chestnut Orchard Design factsheet (http://www.canr.msu.edu/uploads/234/70811/Chestnut_orchard_design_factsheet.pdf).

This work is supported by the Crop Protection and Pest Management Program 2017-70006-27175 from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Any opinions, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

This article was originally published on November 2, 2018 by Michigan State University Extension (www.msue.msu.edu) and reprinted with permission.
the cost of the trial was supported by the collaborator and not by the money CGA contributed to the project. This meant that we had to divert our attention to working on a set of samples the collaborator was interested in, in addition to the chestnut growers' samples. I thought that the risk was worth it under the circumstances. So, we invested a lot of time and spent the collaborator's money. The result was not a happy experience. Unhappy collaborator, unhappy applied scientist (me), unhappy graduate student who heroically tried everything he could to turn this pile of straw into even a little gold, and unhappy chestnut growers.

We Got Over It

The next plan is to go with a genotyping technology we know will meet our criteria, but every step must be done in our lab. This requires considerable expertise in genomics technology, but fortunately, my Notre Dame colleagues are willing to help. As we do this, we will work out how to make all these steps work better, but we know now that every step in the process already works. This is somewhat like having a good woodworking shop with every basic power tool you need to make a fancy rocking chair and having a good pattern for the pieces. Once you get good at making all the pieces and fitting them together, you can make a lot of fancy rocking chairs. So now we are busy doing the work of doing every step ourselves. We will report to all of you how this works this summer (with genotypes of your stuff).

Chestnut Growers of America has contributed $10,000 to help fund the AIMS project research effort. You can contact Professor Romero-Severson with questions at 574-631-3938 (office) or jromeros@nd.edu.

Sometimes your process doesn't work as planned.

The AIMS project uses a type of DNA marker called an EST-SSR. These markers have proven performance for determining interspecific ancestry and immediate pedigree in every species of chestnut. A chosen set of EST-SSR sequences are the “baits” bound to magnetic beads. The beads are used to capture these EST-SSR markers from a given chestnut sample. The captured sequences are then released and sequenced. We have verified that this approach produces very high-quality genotypes that distinguish all chestnut species and identifies related individuals. The problem is the cost.

An opportunity for Chestnut Growers in Iowa and the surrounding area...

Chestnut Growers Workshop

Saturday, February 2 | 9am–5pm
Iowa Arboretum
1875 Peach Ave | Madrid, IA 50156

$10 for Practical Farmers of Iowa Members
$60 for Non-Members of Practical Farmers of Iowa
Lunch is included with registration.

Join PFI now and receive the member registration rate for the workshop!

Speakers include:
Tom Wahl & Kathy Dice, Red Fern Farm
Mike Gold, Missouri Center for Agroforestry
Roger Smith, Prairie Grove Chestnut Growers

Register and more info at https://form.jotform.com/tamsyn/pfi-chestnut-workshop
Questions? Contact Debra at Practical Farmers of Iowa at (515) 232-5661.
2019 Membership Application/ Renewal Form
Chestnut Growers of America, Inc.

Please complete application and **EITHER** mail to: Chestnut Growers of America, Inc., Attn: Jack Kirk, 2300 Bryan Park Avenue, Richmond, VA 23228; **OR** email (scanned copy or fillable PDF, available for download at www.chestnutgrowers.org/resources.html) to: jackschestnuts@gmail.com.

For dues payment, **EITHER** mail check to Jack Kirk at Richmond address; **OR** submit your dues online via PayPal at www.chestnutgrowers.org/paydues.html. **Please ensure that you have submitted both your application and dues.**

| A | Farm/Business/Organization Name: |
| B | First Name | Last Name | First Name | Last Name |
|   | (Individual/First Household Member) | (Second Household Member) |
|   | _____ New Member Application | _____ Renewal (please complete sections I-K below) |
|   | (please complete sections C-K below) | _____ No updates to lines C-H below. Please use 2018 information. |
|   | _____ My information has changed. I have provided updates below. |
| C | Address |
| D | City | State/Province | Zip/Postal Code | Country |
| E | Phone | Fax |
|   | ( ) | ( ) |
| F | Email | Website |
| G | Acreage in Chestnuts | # of Trees | Year First Planted | 2018 Production (lbs.) |
| H | Cultivars Grown |
| I | Please send newsletters in the following format ($5.00/year for print to cover cost of printing and postage): |
|   | _____ Email Only | _____ Print Only | _____ Both Email and Print |
| J | Listing on the CGA website grower directory (chestnutgrowers.org/growers; see reverse for more info): |
|   | _____ Free Listing | _____ Paid Listing | _____ Please do not list my information on the website. |
| K | Membership Dues |
|   | _____ Household Membership | $45.00 |
|   | _____ Individual Membership | $35.00 |
|   | _____ Associate Membership | $50.00 |
|   | _____ Print Format Newsletters (see I above) | $5.00 |
|   | _____ Paid Listing on CGA Website (see J above) | $25.00 |
|   | **Total Dues for 2019:** | | |

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A $5 discount applies if payment is submitted by February 15, 2019.
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- Colossal
- Bouche de Betizac
- Prococe Migoule
- Maraval
- Marsol
- Marigoule
- Marrisard
- Bisalta #2
- Bisalta #3
- Belle Epine
- Gillet
- Szego
- Regis Montis
- Regina Montis
- Marrone di Comballe
- Marrone di Marradi
- Pure American Chestnut
- Bergantz
...and more!

Our web site has full descriptions of each cultivar and lots of help with growing chestnut trees.

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Washington Chestnut Company
6160 Everson Goshen Rd., Everson, WA 98247
Phone (360) 966-7158
Chestnut Growers of America End-of-year Financial Report, 2015-2018

### Income

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### Expenses

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### Membership Report, 2016-2018

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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honorary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complimentary</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>117</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summaries prepared by Jack Kirk, CGA Treasurer / Secretary.**

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### For Sale / Seeking

**SEEKING:** Scion wood of Bergantz chestnut. Exchange possible. Contact: Davor Juretic, juretic.davor@gmail.com.


**FOR SALE:** Facma trailed harvester in great shape. Extra hoses for one or two-person setup. Contact Devon Milligan at (706) 681-1542.

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**YOUR AD HERE**

CGA members can post equipment or other items they want to buy or have for sale, free. Send your submissions to the editor at chestnutgrowersofamerica@gmail.com.

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**Give your marketing a boost with a paid CGA Grower Directory listing**

The online Grower Directory (www.chestnutgrowers.org/growers.html) provides a way for potential customers to look up chestnut growers in their area. An option to post a paid listing helps your orchard stand out with a photo and more detailed information. From the listing, customers can link directly to your website or contact you via email. Your renewal form includes the option for you to select a paid listing (still $25.00/year) or a free listing. CGA regularly directs outside inquiries about local chestnuts to the online directory, so this is a marketing opportunity you can’t afford to miss!
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